

LITERARY LANDSCAPE

High Plains BookFest aims to be inclusive

Thirty authors from 11 states gather in Billings Oct. 19-20 for the 10th annual High Plains BookFest and Book Awards.

According to YMCA Writer's Voice Director Corby Skinner, the festival was designed "to be inclusive of authors outside of the realm of the university, and from within a large geographically specific region."

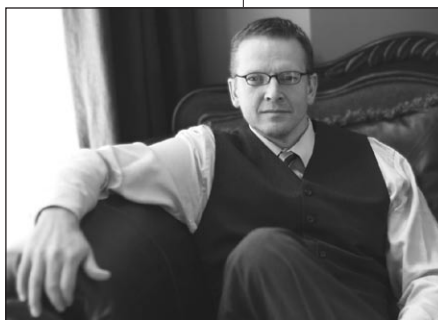
"As director of the Writer's Voice for 20 years, I had developed a great appreciation for writers from the Dakotas, Colorado, Wyoming and Canada such as Mark Sprague, Linda Hasselstrom, Kent Meyers, Guy Vanderhaeghe and Larry Watson."

The other unique aspect of the BookFest is a thematic approach. "Finding Home" is this year's theme; past themes include: "The Spirit of Women," "The Nature of Poetry," "Native Voices," "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," and "The Call of the Wild."

In conjunction with the BookFest, the Parnly Billings Library established the High Plains Book Awards in 2006 to recognize regional authors and/or literary works which examine and reflect life on the High Plains, including three Canadian provinces.

Montana author Thomas McGuane will receive this year's High Plains Book Awards Emeritus Honor. McGuane is the author of 10 novels, as well as screenplays, short fiction and three collections of essays.

His most recent work is *Driving on the Rim* and the short story collection, *Gallatin Canyon*.



Shann Ray, author of *American Masculine*



Chere Justo, Christine Brown and Tom Ferris authored *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*.

10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Titles and authors include:

Art and Photography: *Rim Haven* by Billings author Lynne Montague, about the beauty and wonder of Montana wildlife as it exists in the author's backyard; *Fra Dana: American Impressionist in the Rockies* by Valerie Hedquist and Sue Hart, a fine biographical work about a pioneering Montana artist; *Arapaho Journeys: Photographs and*

Stories from the Wind River Reservation by photographer Sara Wiles, which documents the lives of 40 contemporary Arapaho; and *Relatives with Roots: A Story about Métis Women's Connection to the Land* by Leah Marie Dorion, which tells the story of a Métis grandmother who teaches her granddaughter how to pick traditional medicines.

Poetry: *In Dirt Songs: A Plains Duet* by Twyla M. Hansen and Linda M. Hasselstrom, a reflection on the influence of the Great Plains in poems that celebrate clouds, water and the Earth; and *Killing the Murnion Dogs* by Joe Wilkins, a series of elegies for years and fathers, highways and memories, rivers, shotgun shacks, and myths.

Short Stories: *American Masculine* by Shann Ray, a dark but lyrical collection of stories that reconfigures the myths and imaginings of the American West; and *Quantum Physics and the Art of Departure* by Craig Lancaster, in which the author revisits his home terrain of Montana and takes on the notion of separation.

Nonfiction: *The Boy* by Betty Jane Heggerat tells the story of the 1959 brutal slaying of Ray and Daisy Cook and their five children in Stettler, Alberta; *Honyocker Dreams* by David Mogen chronicles his memories of growing up in small Montana towns in the 1950s;

Book Awards honor region's wealth of literary talent

"The High Plains Book Awards have been the catalyst for the creation of a vibrant, celebratory community of writers who love the High Plains, whether they write about life here or call this region home, and those who love good books," says Virginia Bryan, who has chaired the Book Award committee from the beginning.

She notes that the awards of \$500 in each category have grown steadily, from three awards in 2006, to eight currently. "In 2013, we will add a ninth award for Best Children's Literature," she adds.

"I'm so proud of the library's board of trustees for conceiving of the High Plains Book Awards and for supporting the program as it has become such a success," said Bill Cochran, director of the Parnly Billings Library.

"And I have to admit that it's been a treat as a reader and librarian to discover so many great books and authors from throughout the High Plains of the U.S. and Canada," he adds.

The awards banquet is 6 p.m. Oct. 20 at the Yellowstone Art Museum. For tickets, call Connie Dillon at 406-256-0625.

A complete list of this year's nominees and past year winners can be found on the website: www.highplainsbookawards.org.

and *The Big Sky, By and By* is the collected essays of journalist Ed Kemmick, which offer a contemporary look at Montana through the eyes of everyday, extraordinary people.

Fiction: *Liberty Lanes* by Robin Troy is an engaging and often moving novel about a group of Montana senior citizens bound together by old friendships and romances; and Jenny Shank's *The Ringer* tells the story of a Mexican-American wife of a Mexican immigrant killed by police, the officer who shot her husband, and their sons, who end up playing in the same youth baseball league.

For children: *Racing Home* by Adele Dueck, a fine, detailed look at Norwegian immigrants on the Canadian prairie.

The public readings are free and open to the public. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.highplainsbookawards.org.

The festival wraps up with the High Plains Book Awards banquet, 6 p.m. at the Yellowstone Art Museum.

New season begins for "Reflections West"

Take a five-minute foray into the writing and culture of the West during "Reflections West," a weekly public radio show hosted by David Moore and Lisa Simon.

The season begins in October with the following compelling contributions about the West, paired with passages of literature:

- Beth Cogswell reflects on an alternate, more refined West and pairs her thoughts with a poem by Marie Smith, Oct. 2 and 4;
- Greg Keeler whimsically reflects on the submerged worlds of the West, pairing his thoughts with a poem by Dave Waldman, Oct. 9 and 11;
- Mandy Broadbus Smoker reflects on our fragile connection to the earth and selects a poem by Melissa Kwasny, Oct. 16 and 18;

- Shann Ray reflects on learning the love of basketball from small town heroes; he selects a poem by Sherman Alexie, Oct. 23 and 25; and
- Neil McMahon reflects on the role physical labor has played on the writing of the West, and selects a poem by the late Ed Lahey, Oct. 30 and Nov. 1.

Programs air at 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays on Montana Public Radio and 7:01 p.m. Thursdays on Yellowstone Public Radio, and are posted at reflections.west.org.

Schedule of events

Friday, Oct. 19: The BookFest begins with three readings on the theme "My Home's in Montana," from noon-5 p.m. at the Western Heritage Center.

Offerings include: *Visions and Voices: Montana's One-Room Schoolhouses* by Charlotte Cardwell; *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana* by Chere Justo, Christine Brown and Tom Ferris (a finalist in the Art and Photography and Best Nonfiction categories of the High Plains Book Awards); and *Montana: Real Place, Real People* by writer Alan Kesselheim and photographer Thomas Lee.

On Friday evening, there will be an opening reception for the Book Award finalists followed by a public reading.

Saturday, Oct. 20: Public readings will take place at the Yellowstone Art Museum

Meet the Press (from previous page)

The three books we've published by individual poets were all by invitation. Sales of our anthologies enabled us to afford the expense of printing other books. All our poets help with book sales by participating in book fairs, library reading series, and lots of other marketing experiments ...

NA: A question I always want to ask the poets who become editors and publishers of poetry books: why do you choose to publish poetry books, knowing what you know about the limited audience for these books?

LJ: Why do people do start small poetry magazines and presses? It's more a heartfelt choice than a logical one.

You, me, and others have a passion for poems, and we do what we can to keep the practice and appreciation of poetry alive ...

There's another point I should make: I founded Many Voices Press as a personal outlet by which I could, in some small way, do a public service ...

Lest I sound too altruistic, founding Many Voices Press also gave me a great boost, a great education. Over the three years in making *New Poets of the American West*, I read 12,000 poems (12 poems each from 1,000 submissions). I learned there are a lot of fine poets out there I'd never heard of.

I also read a lot of failed poems, and from these I learned a lot about editing my own work, and about what turns a reader on and what turns a reader off.

NA: When we read together with several other poets in Paterson, NJ, in April, you talked about how much you liked the poets who read because they were accessible, sincere and autobiographical. Could you elaborate on that?

LJ: I like poems made from the nuts and bolts of the real world. "No ideas but in things," said William Carlos Williams.

I am fond of narrative. Words are important, certainly, but "action speaks louder than words" – so I like poems in which people are interacting with each other or with the world

around us. And I like poems that come out of common experience, ordinary lives ...

NA: I'd love to hear a little about your own writing and editing life. Is it helpful to do both? In other words, does editing inspire your writing?

LJ: To me as a poet, yes, it's helpful to also be an editor and teacher. I teach poetry workshops each Monday of every semester, and I write the assignments each week and bring my work to class just like my students ...

Editing the anthologies has been a great education. I'm a better writer, I think, because I've read so many poems ... I like the idea that a poet should be engaged in the world, neck deep in the dirty work of making a life.

Lowell Jaeger is the author of four collections of poems and has edited two anthologies: *New Poets of the American West* and *Poems Across the Big Sky*.

Nin Andrews is the author several collections of poems, and edited *Someone Wants to Steal My Name*, a book of translations of the French poet, Henri Michaux. Her book, *Southern Comfort* was published by CavanKerry Press in 2010.